

IRS TAX TIP 2001-68 TAX TIPS FOR LAST-MINUTE FILERS

WASHINGTON -- With the tax filing deadline close at hand, the Internal Revenue Service offered some tips for those still working on their tax forms:

- Put your social security number on the return – it's not on the label.
- Double-check your figures.
- Sign your form.
- Attach all required schedules.
- Send your return or request a filing extension by April 16 -- April 17 for those in New England and New York State north of Westchester and Rockland counties. The extra day for the Northeast is because the 16th is a legal holiday in Massachusetts, where the IRS processing center for this area is located.

The numbers to check most carefully on the tax return are the identification numbers -- usually Social Security numbers (SSNs) -- for each person listed. This includes the taxpayer, spouse, dependents, and persons listed in relation to claims for the child care or earned income tax credits. Missing or incorrect SSNs can delay or reduce a tax refund. Taxpayers should also check that they have correctly figured the refund or balance due and have taken the right amount from the tax table.

Taxpayers must sign and date their returns. Both spouses must sign a joint return, even if only one had income. Anyone who is paid to prepare a return must also sign it.

The only attachments that should be at the front of the tax return are Form W-2 wage statements, Form W-2G reports of gambling winnings, Form 1099-R pension or annuity statements showing tax withheld, or Form 9465, requesting an installment payment plan. All other required forms and schedules should be behind the Form 1040 or 1040A, in the attachment sequence order listed in the upper right of each page.

People sending payments should make the checks out to "United States Treasury" and should not attach the check to the tax return or to the Form 1040-V payment voucher, if used. The check should include the taxpayer's social security number, daytime phone number, the tax year and the type of form filed.

Taxpayers should file a return, or request a four-month extension of time to file, which will give them until August 15. The extension may be requested by calling (toll-free) 1-888-796-1074, by e-filing a Form 4868 that is included in most tax preparation software, or by sending Form 4868 to the IRS. Those requesting by phone or computer will need the Adjusted Gross Income and Total Tax amounts from their 1999 return.

Those who don't e-file may use the U.S. Postal Service or one of the designated private delivery services to send their forms to the IRS by the deadline. The tax instructions list these private delivery services, which are offered by four companies: Airborne Express, DHL Worldwide Express, Federal Express and United Parcel Service.

Taxpayers who choose to charge an extension-related payment to a credit card through one of the two processors do not have to file Form 4868 to get an extension. Official Payments Corporation may be reached at 1-800-2PAY-TAX (1-800-272-9829), or at www.officialpayments.com. PhoneCharge, Inc. may be reached at 1-888-ALLTAXX (1-888-255-8299), or at www.About1888ALLTAXX.com. There is no IRS fee for credit card payments, but the processors charge a convenience fee.

The IRS Web site at www.irs.gov has forms and publications available for downloading, links to private sector e-file partners, and helpful information on a variety of tax subjects. And the IRS tax help number -- 1-800-829-1040 -- will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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